

# POISONOUS PRODUCTS, DECEPTIVE LABELS

*Surrounded as we are by toxic products, it's important that we study their labels, take note of their health effects, and ditch them in favour of safe substitutes.*

*Part 2 of 2*

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## WHAT AND WHERE THE POISONS ARE

The following chart was prepared in part with the aid of several trips to the supermarket and health food store and a number of sources [see references and resources at end of this article], but I would also encourage readers to do their own research. The chart lists categories of common poisons, their effects on human beings, in what types of products they can be found, and examples of specific [mostly US-sourced] products. Since this chart is an overview, there are several points I want to make.

It is difficult to keep track of all the new chemicals that are constantly being manufactured. The "Pesticides" section provides only a fraction of a per cent of the pesticides that we encounter in our daily lives. Similarly, the "Products" column furnishes only a minute sample of brand name products that contain a given additive. If a brand name product is not listed, this does *not* mean that it lacks the chemical. Rather, it reflects the constraints of space for this article and the difficulty in deciphering what is really in the products because the labels are so imprecise. For instance, the labels on many detergents (such as Mop & Glo) are so vague that I am obliged to rely on other researchers to specify the contents. Lestoil is visible in many more poison categories *not because other products are safe*, but because Lestoil is one of the very few cleansers whose ingredients are plainly listed on the label. My inclusion of some brand name products and not others is in no way intended to single out individual companies or products.

The category of poisons called "dyes" is widely used in foods as well as household detergents and cosmetics. I mention them, however, mostly in reference to non-food items. Although it is crucial to avoid all foods coloured with synthetic dyes, an in-depth discussion of food additives is beyond the scope of this article. Refer to *A Consumer's Dictionary of Food Additives* by Ruth Winter, *The Safe Shopper's Bible* by Steinman and Epstein, and *The Mirage of Safety* by Beatrice Trum Hunter for more details about dyes, medications, hormones and flavourings in food. In doing this research, I have tried to represent adequately the products found in the health food store as well as the supermarket, to repudiate the notion that health food store items are completely free from danger.

Because this chart is an overview, not every chemical listed in the first column causes every symptom in the column, "Effects on the System". However, there is a high level of overlap. The class of chemicals called "solvents" contributes to similar kinds of damage. The same is true for detergents, etc. Individual toxins in a particular group might be less urgently hazardous than others; but, in general, all chemicals that function in a similar way induce similar degenerative symptoms and pathological conditions. As you continue reading the chart, differences between individual chemicals eventually matter less and less, as do the differences between categories of poisons. *All* of them cause serious, if not lethal, damage.

Some of the most contradictory reports involve the relative dangers of cleansing agents. Winter writes that sodium laurel sulphate is merely irritating to the skin; Steinman and Epstein acknowledge that it is also dangerously irritating to the eyes and mucous membranes; and Vance goes even further, referring to Japanese studies that show DNA damage. Hunter (whose book is unfortunately out of print) informs us that the chemical can also affect the absorption of numerous food constituents, among them glucose and methionine (an amino acid)—an important consideration when you realise that the surfactant is a primary ingredient of common toothpaste, which is often swallowed. Hunter alone provides statistics on the maximum amount in parts per million (ppm) at which an

CHEMICAL NAME	FOUND IN	EFFECTS ON THE SYSTEM	PRODUCTS
<p><b>Detergents/Surfactants</b>  <i>These create foam. Don't be fooled if the label says "Natural, from coconut". Detergent is poisonous.</i></p> <p>Sodium lauryl sulphate  Sodium laureth sulphate  Cocamido/Cocamide DEA  Cocamido/Cocamide MEA  Myristyl myristate  Polysorbate (number)  Modified sulphonates  Cocoyl sarcosinamide  Monoethanolamine**  Diethanolamine (DEA)**  Triethanolamine (TEA)**  **Also used as solvents and preservatives.  ...Any combination of, or terms similar to, the above</p>	<p>Metal polish, dishwashing liquid, laundry powder, laundry liquid detergent, spot remover.</p> <p>Shampoo, bar (hand and bath) soap, facial cleanser, bubble bath, toothpaste, shaving cream, hair dye. (US hair colouring products are "grandfathered" by a 1938 law that exempts them from federal regulation.) Any product that produces suds contains at least one detergent.</p> <p>Medicine.</p>	<p>Strips protective oils from skin, leaving it vulnerable to microbial contamination. Scalp eruptions similar to dandruff. Allergic reactions. Eye irritation including early onset of cataracts (from sodium lauryl sulphate), hair loss, liver and kidney cancer (from DEA). Interference with nutrient absorption, disruption of hormones, impeded reproductive functioning (such as decreased sperm count). DNA damage (from sodium laurel sulfate). Triethanolamine, an eye and skin irritant, can react with other disclosed or undisclosed chemicals in a product to form carcinogenic nitrosamines.</p>	<p>Easy-Off Kitchen, Lestoil Concentrated Heavy Duty, Dow Bathroom, Ecover Natural All-Purpose and Simple Green All-Purpose cleaners. Softsoap, Nature's Gate Liquid Soap, Oil of Olay Body Wash. Joy, Ivory Snow and Citra-Solv. Head &amp; Shoulders, Clairol Herbal Essence, Tom's Baby, Nature's Gate, Tom's Natural, Weleda Rosemary and Revlon Flex shampoos. Gillette and Colgate shaving creams. Johnson's Baby Magic and NutriBiotic bubble bath. Pepsodent and Crest toothpaste. Contac Decongestant; Anacin pain relief medicine.</p>
<p><b>BLEACH</b>  <i>If chlorine bleach is mixed with ammonia, deadly chloramine gas fumes are produced.</i></p>	<p>Scouring powder, laundry and other detergent. Paper products such as toilet paper, paper towels and coffee filters.</p>	<p>Corrosive to skin. Lung irritation, sore throat, coughing, wheezing, runny nose. A mixture of bleach and ammonia can kill you.</p>	<p>Ajax and Comet scouring powder. Borateem Color Safe Bleach.</p>
<p><b>AMMONIA</b>  <i>Obtained by blowing steam through specially treated coal, ammonia is highly toxic. If mixed with chlorine bleach, deadly chloramine gas fumes are produced. That is why detergent labels warn not to mix ammonia with bleach. Variations of ammonia include:</i></p> <p><b>Ammonium hydroxide</b>  <i>Made by dissolving ammonia in water.</i></p> <p><b>Ammonium gluconate</b>  <i>Made from gluconic acid and ammonia.</i></p>	<p>Glass cleaner, detergent, disinfectant, hair dye, bathroom cleanser.</p> <p>-----  Cocoa products, animal feed, skin cream, hair dye and straightener, detergent, spot remover.  -----  Emulsifying agent for cheese and salad dressings.</p>	<p>Headaches and difficulty in mental functioning. Severe eye irritation including stinging, watery eyes, vision problems, cataracts and cornea damage. Burning of mucous membranes also results in severe respiratory tract irritation including coughing and gagging, difficulty breathing, asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia. Chemical skin burns, sometimes with ulcerations and lesions. Hair breakage. A mixture of bleach and ammonia can kill you.</p>	<p>Windex and Sweet Life window cleaners. Scrub Free Soap Scum Remover, Lysol Deodorizing Cleaner, Dow Bathroom Cleaner.</p>
<p><b>Solvents</b>  <i>Solvents corrode. They dissolve solid material into liquid. Some solvents are so potent they eat through flesh as easily as they do baked-on food. Solvents are also used to remove barnacles from the bottom of boats. Because some solvents are made from petrochemicals, they also appear under "Plastics".</i></p> <p>Isopropyl alcohol  Glycols: (anything that sounds like or contains) Propylene, Butylene, Ethylene, Polyethylene  Propanol  Ethanol (Ethyl alcohol)*  <i>(*Its safety is debatable and it is often tainted.)</i>  Methanol (wood or Methyl alcohol, wood spirits)  (anything) Ether or Ethyl  Butane, Isobutane, Propane  Acetone, (anything) Acetate  Lye (Sodium Hydroxide, Sodium Sesquicarbonate)  Hydrochloric Acid  Sodium Acid Sulphate</p>	<p>Paint, paint thinner and stripper, marking pens, adhesives, antifreeze, ink, gasoline, spot remover, furniture polish, varnish, glass cleaner, toilet bowl cleaner, oven cleaner, drain opener, disinfectant, rug shampoo, upholstery cleaner, dish detergent, "all-purpose cleaner", air freshener, laundry detergent (liquid and powder). Also used as a "carrier" in pesticides.</p> <p>Shampoo, hair conditioner, nail polish remover, facial mask and astringent, permanent wave solution, body lotion, moisturiser, bath salts, mouthwash, antiperspirant, deodorant, tooth powder, aftershave.</p> <p>Medicine tablets, medicinal creams, cough syrup.</p> <p>Butter, milk, cream, ice cream, cocoa, canned olives and peas, spices; in aerosol cans, e.g., containing whipped cream.</p>	<p>Breakdown of cells. Skin rashes, burning and numbness of skin. Burning, tingling and numbing of nerves, headaches, fainting, dizziness, nerve response depression, impaired perception, stupor, coma, permanent nerve damage. Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain. Clouding of the eyes, vision problems, permanent eye damage such as blindness and, if lye or other acid is splashed in eyes, within minutes. Kidney damage. Liver damage. Leukaemia. Cancers. Irritation/damage to mucous membrane lining, coughing, shallow breathing, difficulty swallowing and other respiratory disturbances. Also heart damage, sometimes leading to attacks. Death. (An article in the March 2, 1999 issue of the <i>New York Times</i> reports on the dangers of solvents, which some teenagers are now sniffing to get "high".)</p>	<p>Fantastik, Pine-Sol. Glass Plus, Sweet Life and Windex glass cleaners. Lysol, Dow Bathroom Cleaner, Vanish, Sani-Flush, Earth Enzymes Drain Opener. Spray 'N Vac. Easy-Off and Dow oven cleaners. Pledge, Mop &amp; Glo Polish. Clairol Herbal Essence Shampoo. Clairol Herbal Essence and Desert Essence conditioners. Johnson's Baby Magic Bubble Bath. Secret, Sure and Arm &amp; Hammer antiperspirant-deodorants; Old Spice deodorant. Kiss My Face, Gillette and Colgate shaving creams. Kiss My Face Moisturizing, Vaseline Intensive Care and LubriDerm lotions. Pepsodent toothpaste. Ben Gay Pain Relieving Cream. Noxema Skin Cream. Anacin and Excedrin pain relief medicine; Children's Tylenol; Vicks Cough Suppressant, and Contac Decongestant.</p>

additive can be present in a compound before it is considered dangerous. Sodium laurel sulphate is presumed to be safe at 10,000 ppm. This may be why most of the other authors defend it, although the question arises: How poisonous does a chemical have to be before its danger is recognised? As for sodium laureth sulphate, which is supposed to be a milder form of sodium laurel sulphate and therefore more acceptable: Winter believes that sodium laureth sulphate is not harmful; Steinman and Epstein write that although sodium laureth sulphate is somewhat milder than sodium laurel sulphate, it is still dangerous because it contains carcinogenic compounds; while Vance reports the presence of a hazardous ether that causes dermatitis. There are many other synthetic detergents that are reported by Steinman and Epstein to be safe but which are asserted by Vance to be toxic (Hunter focuses on food additives).

Regarding the safety of chemicals, then, because their danger is almost always underreported I have chosen to present the more ominous information. Rather than deeming my choice biased, it is more realistic to remember that companies: (1) are in business to make money; (2) are constantly manufacturing new chemicals and products to increase profits; (3) are responsible for conducting their own safety tests; and (4) are trusted by our regulatory agencies to report truthfully the hazards of their own products. Given these lax regulations, are negative data likely to be reported? This question is rhetorical. If companies had nothing to hide, "watch-dog" organisations would not need to exist. Nor would they be filing lawsuits for personal injury and wrongful death.

It is important to remember that the tests themselves (even if they are conducted with the best of intentions and accurately recorded) are not designed to produce data that human beings can easily use.

"The tester," wrote Hunter, "hopes to find a level that does produce a toxic effect so that a 'safe dose' can be established at a lower level, where these effects are not observed."

With our present knowledge, this concept appears simplistic. We now recognise that many adverse effects may be inflicted which at the moment are beneath the threshold of perception and may not appear for 20, 30 or even 40 years—at which time the cause may be completely undeterminable. Hence, one of the basic principles of traditional toxicology—the myth of a "safe dose" level—needs to be discarded.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, it is impossible to extrapolate test results from animals to humans. Not only is animal testing cruel; if different species of mice register completely opposite responses when injected with or fed a poison, how can we know for sure how a human being will react to the same chemical? The bottom line is that our bodies were never made to ingest or transmute synthetic chemicals. It is better to err on the side of caution and avoid the chemicals entirely.

Many readers may find this chart shocking, but unfortunately it is true. Until our labelling laws are changed and regulatory agencies do their job, people will continue to get duped—and sick.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO AVOID POISONS

More than ever, citizens are demanding to have control over what is in the food they eat, the water they drink, the products they use. I have gone to town meetings to protest my local

government's plans to spray pesticides on the edge of roads, pointing out that clippers work just fine. Some people institute class-action lawsuits against major corporations for trying to conceal the toxicity of their products. And still others notice a relationship between the chemical waste dump next door and an astronomical increase in cancer—and notify the press.

The regulations that *do* exist have preposterous loopholes, and chemical companies take advantage of them. We can no longer rely on government to control big business because the government has *become* big business.

It is therefore up to each of us to take charge of our own health and well-being. Here are some suggestions on how we can restore vitality to ourselves and our environment.

### 1. Notice Your Reactions to Various Products

One of the most treacherous myths we must learn to overcome is, "It's all in my head". I am referring to the dizzying variety of symptoms that people can develop from exposure to poisons.

Too often, people ignore what their own bodies are telling them because they simply cannot believe that a poisonous substance would be so prominently used in the marketplace. In this case, the person is giving more credibility to an idea instilled by an outside authority than to his or her own experience and responses.

Some people find it helpful to keep a written record of the dates of their exposure to chemicals. Since they might not immediately observe a connection between exposure and later problems, the record can reveal patterns over time.

Other people recognise instantly when they respond to a toxic chemical: they sneeze when doing the laundry, break out in hives after applying a face cream, feel nauseated from inhaling a room deodoriser, or have teary eyes when they clean

the kitchen floor. *Pay attention to these reactions! They are your body's way of letting you know that something is wrong.* The more you pay attention to these reactions and refuse to block them from your awareness, the more you will learn to trust that you are not crazy for focusing on something "minor" or "trivial".

It is common for industry to negate and ridicule people's reactions to chemicals until the problem reaches epidemic proportions. But thousands of people react negatively to detergents, food additives, medications, the chemical dump site next door. People not specifically diagnosed with multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS) can still be chemically sensitive. Why wait until your symptoms turn into a full-blown, more serious illness?

### 2. Study the Product Labels

Because of our vague and incomplete labelling laws, it is often impossible to tell what exactly is in a product. Some products (particularly cleansers) do carry warnings—often very scary ones—because they are so dangerous. Lysol bathroom cleaner, whose principal ingredient is highly caustic lye, reads bluntly (in part): "Danger: Corrosive – produces chemical burns." And the label on Fantastik cleaner says, after advising the consumer to notify a doctor if the product comes into contact with the eyes or skin: "Not recommended for use by persons with heart conditions or chronic respiratory problems such as asthma, emphysema or obstructive lung disease."

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<p><b>Toxic Metals</b>  <i>Toxic metals don't belong in the body. If the person is deficient in minerals (which is likely, considering the depletion of our soil), the body, unable to distinguish between helpful and harmful minerals, will absorb toxic metals in lieu of life-giving minerals. Dyes often contain metals.</i></p> <p>Aluminium "something" (such as chlorohydrate)  Lead  Cadmium  Fluoride  ...and others</p>	<p>Drain opener, laundry detergent, dishwashing liquid, shoe polish, house paint, artist's oil paint and other art supplies. Antiperspirant, hair dye, moisturiser, body lotion, toothpaste, bar (hand and body) soap, sun block and sunscreen, mascara, eye shadow, rouge and other face powder, lipstick, theatrical and clown makeup.</p>	<p>Stomach cramps, nausea, constipation, vomiting. Skin rash. Weakness, joint and bone pain. Mouth sores. Cancer. Tooth discolouration. Premature ageing. Stillbirths. Immune disorders. Genetic damage. Brain disorders such as Alzheimer's disease (from aluminium build-up in the system), learning disorders. Poor impulse control, leading to violence and murderous outbursts, probably caused by abnormally lowered levels of the brain neurotransmitter serotonin.</p>	<p>Secret, Sure and Arm &amp; Hammer antiperspirant-deodorants. Noxema skin cream. Advil pain medicine. Jergens Skin Smoothing and Vaseline Intensive Care antibacterial lotions. All toothpaste containing fluoride, including but not limited to Pepsodent, Tom's and Crest toothpastes.</p>
<p><b>Pesticides &amp; Fungicides</b>  <i>Most common household soaps and detergents are legally classified as pesticides because they contain pesticides. The label, however, will read "germicidal", "anti-fungal" or "anti-bacterial", rather than "contains pesticides". Not every pesticide present in an insecticide is listed on the label, and some of the harmful effects occur when the different chemicals are combined. Many pesticides are derived from petroleum. What follows is only a partial list:</i></p> <p>Acephate, Orthophenyl-phenol, Lindane, Captan, Methidathion, Benomyl, Diazinon, Fenvalerate, Linuron, Botran, Aldicarb, Cabaryl, Car bendaxim, Al-lethrin, Diphenyl, Dieldrin, Trifluralin, Methomyl, Imazilil, Parathion, Sodium Orthophenylphenate, Folpet, Chlordane, DDT, Dieldrin, Chlorothalonil, Demeton, Chlorpyrifos, Orthophenylamine, Azinphosmethyl, Thiabendazole, Benzaflor, Dicloran, Permethrin, Iprodione, Ethion, Dicofol, Endrin, Toxaphene, Ethylene Bisdithiocarbamates (EBDCs), Endosulfan, Naphthalene, Cyfluthrin, Hexachlorobenzene (HCB), Dimethoate, Hydroquinoline Bromide, D-limonene, Orthophenylphenate, Nitro-benzenamine, Phenothrin, Resmethrin, Tetramethrin</p>	<p><i>Obvious products:</i>  Mothballs, weed killer, insect repellent, insecticide, flea and cockroach spray, rat poison, anti-fungal and anti-algal swimming pool chemicals, pet flea and tick spray, dust and bath solution.</p> <p><i>Items listed as germicidal, anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, disinfectant, or killing mould and mildew, including:</i>  Most bathroom, kitchen, laundry and personal care soaps such as hand and body bar soap, liquid and powder laundry detergent and dishwashing liquid; disinfectants and sanitisers such as toilet bowl cleaner; deodorant; hand and body lotion; mouthwash; anti-fungal medicine cream and foot powder; facial mask.</p> <p><i>Unidentified in:</i>  Carpets, finished wood products, clothing (non-organic cotton is heavily sprayed).</p> <p><i>Produce is heavily sprayed. Among the most toxic are:</i>  Strawberries, green and red bell peppers, peaches, celery, apples, apricots, cherries, grapes, lettuces, cucumbers, cantaloupe, watermelon, spinach, green beans, pears, grapefruit and oranges. Produce is even sprayed after being picked. Bananas and tomatoes are picked unripe, and then artificially "ripened" with polyethylene gas just before they reach the stores.</p>	<p>Flu-like symptoms such as weakness, muscle and joint pain and fatigue. Digestive disturbances such as nausea, vomiting and stomach burns. Nervous system disorders: mood swings, emotional and mental disorientation, lack of motor coordination, slurred speech, insomnia, memory loss, dizziness, tingling, numbness, tremors, paralysis, convulsions, grand mal seizures. Cardiac irregularities. Swelling of face, eyelids, lips, mouth and throat. Excessive salivation. Liver and kidney damage. Rashes and burns of the skin. Shortness of breath, chest pains. Urinary tract damage. Birth defects (including stillbirths) and genetic mutations. Cancers of all types, including bladder; tumours of liver, lung and thyroid gland. The kind of damage and time period of onset of symptoms are unknown for most pesticides, as they are either inadequately tested or not tested at all.</p> <p>Keep in mind that chemicals often degenerate into other toxic components once they are ingested. Only one example among thousands is the fungicide Captan, whose breakdown products include a chemical similar to thalidomide, widely known to cause birth defects. Labelling laws do not cover pesticides that enter the USA on produce from other countries such as Mexico.</p>	<p><i>Although almost 100% of household detergents contain pesticides, only a very small number of products indicate specifically that they are antibacterial or fungicidal. In any case, the labels would never list "pesticides" as one of the ingredients.</i></p> <p>"Generic" mothballs. Comet Homecare Bathroom Cleaner with Disinfectant. Head &amp; Shoulders Shampoo. Joy and Palmolive Antibacterial hand soaps, dishwashing liquid. Dial Anti-Bacterial Soap, Suave Antibacterial Hand Soap. Zest Family Deodorant Bar. Germ-X and Purell hand sanitisers. Lever 2000 Body Wash. Vaseline Intensive Care Anti-Bacterial Hand Lotion.</p> <p>The FDA has authorised that an "allowable" amount of pesticides can be present in foods, which include (but are not limited to): meats, fruits and vegetables, baked goods, liquor, candy and beverages. The pesticide so-called "residues" are present not only because of what is sprayed on crops; many ingredients classified as pesticides are also used in the processing of food.</p>

Now that you know the hazards of a product that reads simply "Do not swallow", there is no excuse for buying it. And there is certainly no excuse for purchasing products whose warnings are more explicit. *Read everything before you buy.* Refusing to purchase, store or use it may save your life and the lives of your family, friends or pets.

### 3. Exercise Your Legal Right to Request the MSDS

The one document that most thoroughly addresses the degree of toxicity in chemicals, and what kinds of safety measures are required when handling them, is rarely seen by consumers. In the USA, all industries that manufacture potentially dangerous substances—whether these substances are single ingredients or a mixture of ingredients such as in a bathroom cleaner—are required by the government-run Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue a Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS). This legal document addresses various aspects of a product's safety: Is it flammable? Does it emit toxic fumes? Is it a skin or eye irritant? Is it poisonous when ingested and, if so, how much is needed to kill? How must it be discarded? Is it safe to dump in the environment? Is it chemically stable; that is, does it decompose or react to heat or cold? And does it emit other toxic chemicals as a byproduct of its breakdown? Industry does not routinely volunteer this information to the general public. And most consumers don't know that this documentation exists or that they have a legal right to ask for it.

Contact the company that manufactures your soap, shampoo, cosmetic, cleaner or paint, and ask for a copy of the MSDS. Ask your local supermarket or health food store to post the data prominently. Send your local representative copies of the MSDS along with other documentation about the dangers of chemicals.

### 4. Use Safe Substitutes Instead of Poisons

If you are committed to your health and receptive to innovative methods, you will almost certainly want to throw out the contents of your medicine chest and replace most (if not all) of the items with herbal and homeopathic remedies, which are generally more effective and far safer than the poisons found in a drug store. In-depth information on how to replace synthetic drugs is beyond the scope of this essay; so do some research on homeopathy and herbs. Two fine books on the subject of herbs are *How To Be Your Own Herbal Pharmacist*, by Linda Rector-Page, and *The Scientific Validation of Herbal Medicine*, by Daniel B. Mowrey.

You can learn a great deal about natural remedies and alternatives to toxic substances simply by visiting a good health food store, even though you may want few of the personal care items, and probably none of the detergents, that you find there. Most of the detergents sold in health food stores are poisonous. And some of the hand lotions and cosmetics are similar to those found in mainstream drug stores, although they do have fewer additives, feel better and generally smell better than their mainstream counterparts. Those who want the convenience of ready-made, safe or relatively safe commercially made personal-care items may want to shop for products from the American company Aubrey Organics (which also manufactures cosmetics) and the international company Weleda, Inc., which also makes wonderful homeopathic

remedies (many of them available only by prescription).

It is difficult to find uncontaminated and satisfactory skin care products and cosmetics. And it is almost impossible to locate effective cleansers that are free of poisons.

The dangers of bleach are well documented. One of the best-kept secrets for bleaching and cleaning is pure hydrogen peroxide ( $H_2O_2$ ). Hydrogen peroxide is both safe and highly effective as a germicide because, chemically,  $H_2O_2$  breaks down into water ( $H_2O$ ) and oxygen ( $O_2$ )—which is known for killing most kinds of bacteria, viruses and fungi. Food grade hydrogen peroxide is used medicinally, for agriculture and livestock, and in the food and electronics industries. I want to emphasise that *the only acceptable hydrogen peroxide is food grade*. Non-food-grade  $H_2O_2$ , the kind found in drug stores and supermarkets, is unnecessarily riddled with dangerous stabilisers and other additives.

*The dilution of the hydrogen peroxide is also of paramount importance.* Drug store  $H_2O_2$  is sufficiently weak at 3% strength, though, as I already mentioned, it is not safe because of the additives. Six per cent hydrogen peroxide, the major component of Clorox 2, is caustic to the skin (and contains additives). Food grade  $H_2O_2$  is usually sold to individuals at 6% strength, to which one adds equal amounts of water to create a safe 3% solution. Food grade  $H_2O_2$  concentration of 35% or 50% burns your skin, blinds you if it gets splashed in your eyes, and can kill you if you ingest it. Nevertheless, food grade hydrogen peroxide, *if handled correctly at the proper dilution*, is not only safe but beneficial.

There is an important difference between the caustic effects of  $H_2O_2$  and the caustic effects of poisons like neurotoxins or petrochemicals. Even when added to water or another benign substance, neurotoxins and petrochemicals are inherently lethal. Their molecules may be more spread out, but this does not diminish their essentially toxic nature: at a weak dilution, they still maim and kill. Food grade hydrogen peroxide, on the other hand, changes its inherent character at

weaker dilutions, as when it is dispersed in water. (A source for food grade  $H_2O_2$  is *Family Health News*, 9845 NE 2nd Avenue, Miami Shores, FL 33138, USA, tel +1 303 759 8710 or 1-800 284 6263, toll-free in USA.)

For general cleaning, the only commercial preparation I know of that is genuinely safe and really cleans well (it even removes gasoline, oil, ink and blood from clothing) is Planet Solutions Multi-Purpose. The Material Safety Data Sheet from the company is impressive: the solution is stable at all temperatures, is not flammable, does not irritate skin or eyes, does not emit toxic fumes and does not break down into or react with other chemicals. The "First Aid Measures" section of the MSDS states that there is no known level of toxicity, whether the fluid contacts the eyes or skin, is inhaled or ingested. Because the product is not classified as a detergent and is truly safe, there are no warnings on the label.

Planet Solutions is made from amino acids, minerals, enzymes and botanicals derived from edible, leafy green and seed-bearing plants, and it contains absolutely no detergents, solvents, pesticides, fragrances, dyes, plastics or any other additives. The fluid cuts grease electrically rather than chemically: the molecules, imbued with a negative-negative ion charge, wrap around the molecules of oil and dirt rather than interact chemically.

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CHEMICAL NAME	FOUND IN	EFFECTS ON THE SYSTEM	PRODUCTS
<b>Plastics/Petroleum</b> <i>Many alcohols are derived from petroleum.</i> Mineral Oil Petroleum Jelly Petrolatum and Paraffin Microcrystalline wax PVP/VA Copolymer Propylene Glycol Dipropylene Glycol Butylene Glycol Polyethylene Glycol Acrylic polymers Toluene and Xylene Phenol Petroleum hydrocarbon resin Butane ...anything that contains Ethyl, Methyl, Propyl, Butyl, Octyl-ene, -eth	Floor and furniture polish, antifreeze, air freshener.  Lip balm, eye products, nail polish, nail polish remover, hair spray, hand and body lotion, moisturiser, foundation, makeup.  Medicine.  Chewing gum base, ice cream, beverages, baked goods, meat products. Plastics are also routinely used to coat fruits and vegetables, including organic produce (although beeswax is sometimes used on organics).	Coats skin with a layer of plastic (literally), inhibiting its ability to breathe, to eliminate waste materials, to moisturise itself and to generate new healthy cells. Common reactions are blackheads, pimples, dry skin, photosensitivity (hypersensitivity to the sun), premature ageing of the skin. Cardiac disorders. Allergic reactions. Malnutrition. Immune system disorders. Central nervous system depression. Liver and kidney damage. Asphyxiation. Narcotic effects.	Mop & Glo, Pledge Polish. Lestoil Concentrated Heavy Duty Cleaner. Le Natural Stick French Green Clay Deodorant; Secret Antiperspirant. Gillette Shaving Cream. Ponds Cold Cream; Jergens Skin Smoothing, Vaseline Intensive Care Anti-Bacterial and Lubriderm Moisturizing Lotion. Vaseline Petroleum Jelly. Children's Tylenol; Excedrin and Anacin pain relief medicine; Vicks Cough Suppressant.
<b>Synthetic Fragrances</b> <i>Synthetic fragrances may contain as many as 200 ingredients, which instead of being listed separately can simply be described as "Fragrance". The main component of fragrance is poisonous solvent (which can also be burned as fuel). Air freshener desensitises the nose by covering nasal passages with a film of oil, masking one odour with another or numbing the olfactory nerves.</i>	Dishwashing detergent, window and glass cleaner, antifreeze, air freshener, furniture and shoe polish. Shampoo, bar (hand and body) soap, moisturiser, hand lotion, toothpaste, perfumes, shaving and face cream, bubble bath and bath salts, disposable wipes, sanitary napkins, antiperspirant, deodorant, talcum powder, feminine hygiene spray, tissues, toilet paper, tampons.	Skin rashes, blisters, changes in colouration of the skin. Digestive disturbances, including vomiting and diarrhoea. Muscular aches and pains, including shoulder pain. Coughing, irritation of mucous membranes. Allergies, including sneezing. Sluggishness, fatigue. Headaches, mood swings and irritability, dizziness and vertigo, confusion, coma. Narcotic effects.	Pledge furniture polish. Sweet Life Window Cleaner. Easy-Off Oven Cleaner. Softsoap, Joy, Zest Family Deodorant Bar, Oil of Olay Body Wash. Clairol Herbal Essence, Revlon Flex, Head & Shoulders and Johnson's Baby Shampoo. Johnson's Baby Magic Bubble Bath. Clairol Herbal Essence Conditioner. Ponds Cold Cream, Noxema Skin Cream; Jergens Skin Smoothing, Lubriderm Moisturizing, and Vaseline Intensive Care Anti-Bacterial Lotion. Colgate and Kiss My Face shaving creams. Old Spice Deodorant. Arm & Hammer, Secret and Sure antiperspirant-deodorants. Carefree Longs and Kotex Lightdays sanitary napkins. Playtex Deodorant Tampons. Vicks Cough Suppressant.
<b>Synthetic Flavours</b> <i>Synthetic fragrances are chemically related to flavours (like those found in toothpaste), and are usually manufactured from alcohol solvents. So-called "natural" flavors are not natural, unadulterated or whole.</i>	Medicine. Ice cream and other dairy products, ices, candy, baked goods, tea, coffee, spices, syrups, chewing gum, soft drinks, pudding, gelatin, liquor, condiments. Ethyl acetate is used as a nail polish solvent and as a flavouring for candy, baked goods, liquor, ice cream, chewing gum.		
<b>Preservatives</b> <i>Classified as anti-microbial agents, some preservatives are also used as flavourings.</i> Formaldehyde ( <i>embalming fluid used for corpses</i> ), (anything) aldehyde Parabens: Propyl, Butyl, Ethyl, Benzyl, Heptyl, Methyl and (anything) Hydroxybenzoate Benzoic Acid Sodium Benzoate Ethylenediamine Tetra-acetic Acid (EDTA) Tetrasodium EDTA Calcium Disodium EDTA BHT (Butylated Hydroxytoluene) BHA (Butylated Hydroxyanisole) 2-bromo-2-nitropropane-1,3-diol* Imidazolidinyl urea* Diazolidinyl urea* DMDM Hydantoin* Quaternium-15* (*These chemicals either release or degrade into deadly formaldehyde.)	Paint, paint thinner, paint stripper, spot remover, furniture polish, lacquer, varnish, glass cleaner, toilet bowl cleaner, oven cleaner, drain opener, disinfectant, rug shampoo, upholstery cleaner, dishwashing liquid, air freshener, "all-purpose cleaner", laundry detergent.  Bar (hand and body) soap, shaving cream, shampoo, nail polish remover, facial mask and astringent, cold cream, permanent wave solution, aftershave lotion, bubble bath, moisturiser, eyeliner, antiperspirant, deodorant, mouthwash.  Medicine tablets, cough syrup.  Baked, canned and packaged goods, sweets, fish, meats, condiments, dairy preparations, soda. Most supermarket foods contain preservatives.	Headaches. Skin rashes, inflammation, ulcers and burns. Eye irritation and damage. Irritation of lungs and mucous membranes, asthma. Flu-like symptoms such as sore throat, coughing and sneezing. Various cancers (especially from formaldehyde, a proven carcinogen). Allergies. Digestive disturbances. Blurry vision, inability to concentrate. Moodiness, mental confusion, emotional outbursts, hyperactivity. Blood in urine. Kidney damage. Muscle weakness, muscle cramps, joint pains, lack of motor coordination. Tumours. Chromosome aberrations and reproductive disorders.	Gillette and Kiss My Face shaving creams. Clairol Herbal Essence, Johnson's Baby, Nature's Gate, Tom's Natural, and Revlon Flex Shampoo. Desert Essence Conditioner. Sure Antiperspirant-Deodorant. Johnson's Baby Magic and NutriBiotic bubble baths. Softsoap and Nature's Gate liquid soap; Oil of Olay Body Wash. Ecover Natural All-Purpose Cleaner. Jergens Skin Smoothing, Lubriderm Moisturizing, Kiss My Face Moisturizer, Nature's Gate Moisturizing and Vaseline Intensive Care Anti-Bacterial Lotion. Listerine and Scope mouthwashes. Children's Tylenol; Excedrin and Advil pain relief medicines. Mylanta Antacid; Contac Decongestant; Vicks Cough Suppressant.

CHEMICAL NAME	FOUND IN	EFFECTS ON THE SYSTEM	PRODUCTS
<b>Dyes</b> <i>Most dyes are synthesised from coal tar. Many contain aluminium and other toxic metals to give a shine to makeup.</i> Azo colour/dyes/compounds D & C Blue (number)* D & C Brown (number)* D & C Green (number)* D & C Orange (number)* D & C Yellow (number)* D & C Violet (number) D & C Red (number)* ** (*Some also contain Aluminum Lake) (*Some also contain Barium, Zirconium and Strontium Lake)	Detergents and cleaners for kitchen, bathroom, laundry, dishes, furniture, home.  Shampoo, bar (hand and body) soap, mouthwash, bubble bath and bath salts, moisturiser, facial powder, rouge, mascara, eyeliner, hair dye, most cosmetics.  Medicines.  Candy, pudding, bakery products, chips, carbonated beverages, pet food, packaged cereal, canned meat, condiments, soup, pasta, caviar, fresh fruits and vegetables.	Allergic reactions, including hives. Eye irritation and permanent blindness. Leukaemia (4% of all cases due to hair dye). Hodgkin's disease. Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma (20% of all cases due to hair dye). Multiple tumours, including in kidneys and adrenal glands. Cancer of the thyroid, bladder and intestinal tract. Behavioural problems and emotional volatility; Attention Deficit Disorder (especially in children). Interference of brain-nerve transmission. Chromosome damage. Reproductive mutations.	Windex Glass and Sweet Life window cleaners. Head & Shoulders, Clairol Herbal Essence, Revlon Flex and Johnson's Baby shampoos. Clairol Herbal Essence Conditioner. Johnson's Baby Magic Bubble Bath. Zest Family Deodorant Bar. Joy Detergent. Old Spice Deodorant. Pepsodent and Crest toothpastes. Listerine and Scope mouthwashes. Children's Tylenol; Excedrin pain relief medicine; Sominex sleeping pills; Contac Decongestant; Vicks Cough Suppressant. Trix and Froot Loops cereal.

Thus the solution is suitable even for bathing pets and for personal hygiene (I also use it for skin rashes). (To obtain samples of Planet Solutions at cost, telephone +1 719 689 5842, or 1-800 301 991, toll-free USA, or 888-480-9949, 24-hr hotline, toll-free USA; or e-mail stopthepoison@wsebtv.net.)

### 5. Educate Your Family, Friends and Neighbours

Begin with the people you know who would be most open to hearing this information. Do *not* approach them with, "Do you know you're doing everything wrong?", as this will only make them feel ashamed, worthless and defensive. Instead, begin by describing how much better you feel when you don't use poisons, and ask if they have noticed anything similar regarding themselves. Make sure to provide them with alternatives to what they are using while you explain how they are poisoning themselves.

### A Final Word: You Can't Afford to be Apathetic

Our lives have been irreversibly touched by the conveniences of soon-to-be 21st-century technology, but we are sicker than we have ever been. Our air, water, soil, vegetation and animals are also sick. The Earth can regenerate itself, given thousands of years, but people don't have that lifespan. Nor do we possess the comparable ability to adapt to unfavourable conditions.

Those who appear to be safe from immune system malfunction simply have a higher threshold of tolerance for chemical poisoning; it is only a matter of time before our poisonous environment makes presumably healthy people as ill as their more sensitive sisters and brothers.

Don't be afraid to make waves and rock the boat, whether it's educating your family and friends, lobbying your elected officials to implement honest labelling laws, or confronting industry executives. People have become anaesthetised to the dangers around them. When we live with something every day, because it's so commonplace we think that it is normal and thus healthy, correct and proper. But the ordinariness of a situation doesn't make it legitimate or safe. It simply means that we have forgotten how to think and feel for ourselves.

Protect yourself and your loved ones. Your home no longer has to be a toxic waste dump site.

**Editor's Note:** Due to space constraints, we are unable to reprint the full text of the author's article, including an 18-page chart listing safe substitutes. The complete 50-page, spiral-bound document, titled "The Politics of Poison", is available from the author for USD\$15.00 (inc. p&h in USA; elsewhere, contact author re p&h costs).

### Endnotes

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- Human Ecology Action League (HEAL) is one of the best-known groups for the chemically sensitive. The organisation has a quarterly publication and books for sale, and is a wonderful resource for non-poisonous, hard-to-find items. (For information, contact HEAL, PO Box 29629, Atlanta, Georgia 30359-0629, USA, telephone +1 (404) 248 1898, e-mail HEALNatnl@aol.com.)
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### About the Author:

Nina Silver, PhD, is an holistic health educator, Reichian psychotherapist and social-change agent. Her non-fiction, fiction and poetry in the fields of psychology, health, feminism, natural science and metaphysics have been internationally published.